

## **IV. ACHIEVING THE VISION**

### **CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The quality of life in Newtown is influenced by the quality, quantity and distribution of its natural resources. The Plan of Conservation and Development is a municipal tool to preserve and protect those elements of Newtown's natural environment that contribute to the Town's character and quality of life. The POCD defines those elements through a natural resource inventory process and by establishing goals, strategies and implementation recommendations for protecting Newtown's natural environment. Plan Memorandum #3, Conservation and Natural Resources provides a full discussion of this topic.

#### **B. DEFINING NEWTOWN'S NATURAL RESOURCES**

**NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY:** The process of protecting Newtown's natural environment included a documentation of the town's natural resources, including the geologic (soils, bedrock & surficial geology), hydrologic (rivers, streams, lakes and ponds) and biologic (plant and animal habitat) characteristics of the natural landscape. This inventory also documented Newtown's existing open space resources.

This natural resource inventory used Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to map and analyze natural resource information to provide a foundation of information used in formulating policy recommendations that are designed to ensure proper protection of the Town's natural features identified. The mapping of these natural resources also provides an opportunity to observe, on a town-wide scale, the distribution of the elements that help define Newtown's natural landscape. The ability to visualize the distribution of the town's natural resources through maps ensures that the context in which policies affecting natural resources and open space is not lost.

#### **C. CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES: ISSUES, GOALS AND ACTION AGENDA**

The protection of Newtown's natural resources is a difficult task due to the many competing interests for the use of land. Proper allocation of Newtown's finite natural resources is a balancing act that involves consideration for private property rights, the economic development needs of the community and public health and safety requirements.

In recent years, an approach to natural resource protection and open space planning has gained a focus that involves the linkage or expansion of existing open space resources with other protected open space in the town and the surrounding region. This approach transcends town borders and looks more broadly at regional open space networks to find opportunities for linkage. Greenway planning, as it is often referred to, has been embraced by the State in the formation of the Connecticut Greenways Council, a part of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. This approach not only provides a regional open space network, but also improves the communities' natural infrastructure by providing close-to-home recreational opportunities.

Basic to the protection of Newtown natural resources are the following precepts:

- Growth will continue to take place;
- Land is a basic and finite resource and control of its use is essential to the public welfare;
- The town has the power and the responsibility to preserve critical natural resources through

**Figure 4 – Natural Resource Areas for Open Space Consideration**

- planning and the regulation of land use;
- The Town has the legal authority to acquire open space and to administer and maintain acquired property in the public interest.

The process of updating Newtown's POCD, identified the key issues concerning the Town's important natural resources and the need for their protection. The following section describes those issues, establishes community planning goals to be used to guide future activities affecting those resources and recommends an action agenda for achieving those goals.

### **ISSUE #1: NEWTOWN'S WETLANDS AND WATER COURSES**

1. Wetlands function as water storage areas, natural water purification systems, ground water recharge areas and natural habitat areas.
2. Vernal pools are intermittent watercourses with wildlife and plant life indigenous to this habitat.

**Goal:** Continue to preserve and protect Inland Wetlands and Watercourses from potential sources of contamination or development.



Boggs Hill Road

### **Strategies:**

Section/ Issue	No.	Strategy	Leader	Required Support	Required Support	Required Support
CANR1	1.	Maintain a regulatory policy of no net loss of wetlands.	CC			
CANR1	2.	Provide increased protection of wetlands and watercourses by evaluating actions such as:	CC			
CANR1	2a.	Increasing the current requirement for regulatory review of development activities at the current 100-foot distance from wetlands to 500 feet;	CC			
CANR1	2b.	Requiring that all regulated wetlands be incorporated into protected open space.	CC			
CANR1	3.	Require development applications to identify and protect vernal pools as regulated wetlands.	CC			

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Section/ Issue	No.	Strategy	Leader	Required Support	Required Support	Required Support
CANR1	4.	Improve the enforcement of wetland, soil erosion and sedimentation control regulations by encouraging the adoption of penalties for violation.	CC	PZC	BS	LC
CANR1	5.	Where feasible, create a network of buffers and greenways along watercourses to permit resource protection and public access.	PZC			

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## ISSUE #2: SURFACE WATER AND GROUND WATER RESOURCES

1. The protection of the quality of Newtown's water resources has been identified by Newtown residents as paramount to the goal of protecting Newtown's natural resources.
2. Stratified drift aquifers within Newtown represent important existing and potential sources of drinking water.
3. Portions of Newtown's surface water resources do not meet DEP's targeted water quality classification.
4. Stream corridors filter pollutants, while providing habitat and travel corridors for wildlife.



Pootatuck River at Wasserman Way

**Goal:** Achieve and protect high water quality classifications throughout Newtown.

### Strategies:

Section/ Issue	No.	Strategy	Leader	Required Support	Required Support	Required Support
CANR2	1.	Adopt the CT DEP's suggested Water Quality Classifications for Newtown's water resources.	BS	LC	BB	
CANR2	2.	Actively pursue updating the research and mapping of the Pootatuck Aquifer that was originally done in the late 1970's and early 1980's.	BS	BF	LC	

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Section/ Issue	No.	Strategy	Leader	Required Support	Required Support	Required Support
CANR2	3.	Consider expanding the protection of the Pootatuck Aquifer recharge area.	CC	PZC	BS	
CANR2	4.	Support improved pollution-discharge standards.	BS	LC	PZC	
CANR2	5.	Create additional aquifer-protection areas in Newtown to protect drinking water quality for future use.	CC	PZC		
CANR2	6.	Expand Newtown's aquifer protection regulations. Consider aquifer zoning overlay protection to include the Deep Brook, Limekiln Brook, North Branch of the Pootatuck, Pond Brook, and Upper Aspetuck stratified drift aquifers.	CC	PZC		
CANR2	7.	Continue to protect existing and potential water supply aquifers and water supply watershed lands from land uses that pose a risk to the maintenance of high water quality.	CC	PZC		
CANR2	8.	Promote the utilization of storm water management regulations that minimize the use of impervious surfaces and require on-site infiltration to control water run-off, maintain water quality, recharge ground-water systems, and reduce non-point water pollution.	CC	PZC	BZC	BS
CANR2	9.	Implement the best available techniques and technologies for storm water management.	CC	PZC	BZC	
CANR2	10.	Require that all development preserve the pre-development hydrology of the site.	CC	PZC	BZC	
CANR2	11.	Evaluate river protection overlay districts to:				
CANR2	11a.	Protect life, public safety and property;	CC	PZC		
CANR2	11b.	Protect and improve water quality by filtering pollutants and sediments;	CC	PZC		
CANR2	11c.	Stabilize stream banks and river beds;	CC	PZC		
CANR2	11d.	Improve aquatic habitat; and	CC	PCZ		
CANR2	11e.	Provide travel corridors for wildlife.	CC	PZC		
CANR2	12.	Support measures that will protect the Deep Brook/Pootatuck Wild Trout Management Area from pollution and elevated water temperatures.	CC	PZC		
CANR2	13.	Identify existing threats and develop mitigation plans for key surface and groundwater resources in Newtown.	CC			

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### ISSUE #3: FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

1. Flood hazard areas and floodways are vital elements of the natural storm water management systems in Newtown.
2. Development within flood hazard areas could result in the loss of life and property.

3. Municipal land use policies and regulations can affect the ability of flood plains to effectively and safely accommodate and discharge storm water.

**Goal:** Regulate development and storm water management activities within flood hazard areas to protect life and property and to preserve the natural storm retention functions of the watershed.

**Strategies:**

Section/ Issue	No.	Strategy	Leader	Required Support	Required Support	Required Support
CANR3	1.	Continue to strengthen municipal regulation of the flood hazard areas identified by the Federal Emergency Management Administration to protect life and property and to maintain effective natural storm water management systems.	LC	CC	PZC	
CANR3	2.	Maintain flood hazard controls that will assure continued participation in the National Flood Insurance Program and Community Rating System.	BS	LC	CC	PZC

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**ISSUE#4: NEWTOWN'S FARMLAND**

1. Prime agricultural land is an important natural resource for the local production of food.
2. Lands in agricultural use contribute to the scenic character of Newtown's landscape and provide a link to the Town's agricultural past.
3. Un-protected prime agricultural land will remain under economic pressures for conversion to residential and other non-agricultural uses.

**Goal:** Protect prime agricultural land resources and promote agricultural uses.



Sugar Hill

**Strategies:**

Section/ Issue	No.	Strategy	Leader	Required Support	Required Support	Required Support
CANR4	1.	Develop a Town policy and adopt incentives that encourages the preservation of farmland.	BS	LC	EDC	BF

Section/ Issue	No.	Strategy	Leader	Required Support	Required Support	Required Support
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>2.</b>	Strengthen and expand land-use policies and regulations that conserve prime agricultural businesses and equestrian activities by utilizing tools such as the Conservation and Agricultural zone that are specifically designed for such purposes.	<b>PZC</b>			
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>3.</b>	Evaluate off-site impacts of new development on adjacent farmland.	<b>PZC</b>	<b>CC</b>		
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>4.</b>	Implement an "Agricultural Buffer Zone."	<b>PZC</b>			
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>5.</b>	Work with agricultural businesses and land owners to conserve land used for agricultural purposes through the use of:				
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>5a.</b>	Conservation easements;	<b>BS</b>	<b>LC</b>	<b>PZC</b>	<b>LC</b>
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>5b.</b>	The purchase of development rights, open-space acquisitions;	<b>BS</b>	<b>LC</b>	<b>OS</b>	<b>BF</b>
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>5c.</b>	Purchase-lease back agreements designed to sustain agricultural uses; and	<b>BS</b>	<b>LC</b>	<b>BF</b>	
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>5d.</b>	The utilization of the "490" reduced tax assessment program.	<b>BS</b>	<b>LC</b>	<b>BF</b>	
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>6.</b>	Encourage the development of farmers' markets and other types of agricultural businesses.	<b>EDC</b>	<b>PZC</b>	<b>BS</b>	
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>7.</b>	Assist agricultural businesses to create practical means of protecting farmland from wildlife.	<b>EDC</b>	<b>PZC</b>	<b>OS</b>	
<b>CANR4</b>	<b>8.</b>	Ensure that agricultural uses are compatible with environmental concerns and where necessary, develop protective buffers for watercourses and other sensitive resources	<b>PZC</b>	<b>CC</b>		
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#### **ISSUE #5: NEWTOWN'S INDIGENOUS WILDLIFE AND PLANT LIFE NATURAL RESOURCES.**

1. Newtown's varied topography, forested tracts, abundant watercourses, ponds, lakes and wetlands provide habitat that supports a variety of plants and animals.
2. The Connecticut Department of Protection has identified sites in Newtown that contain unique habitats supporting endangered, threatened or special concern species.

**Goal:** Conserve and protect natural systems and their functions in order to maintain indigenous wildlife and plant life.

## Strategies:

Section/ Issue	No.	Strategy	Leader	Required Support	Required Support	Required Support
CANR5	1.	Develop methods and support actions that protect wildlife and plant life habitat areas identified as “endangered, threatened, and special concern” by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection’s, Natural Diversity Database.	PZC	CC	BZC	OS
CANR5	2.	Preserve large undisturbed and contiguous blocks of land to sustain diverse wildlife habitat.	OS	PZC	BZC	CC
CANR5	3.	Identify existing wildlife corridors and support actions that preserve habitat needed for the survival of indigenous wildlife species.	CC	OS	PZC	
CANR5	4.	Develop a working relationship with Newtown’s several fish and game conservation organizations to support actions that preserve habitat needed for the survival of indigenous wildlife species.	CC	OS	BS	
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## ISSUE#6: STEEP SLOPES, RIDGELINES, HILLTOPS AND SCENIC VIEWS IN NEWTOWN.

1. The character of Newtown’s natural landscape is defined in part by the presence of areas of steep slopes, prominent ridgelines and hilltops.
2. A number of vantage points in Newtown afford beautiful views of Newtown’s countryside.

**Goal:** Preserve and protect Newtown’s steep slopes, ridgelines and scenic views.

## Strategies:

Section/ Issue	No.	Strategy	Leader	Required Support	Required Support	Required Support
CANR6	1.	Support actions that will lead to the protection of slopes of 25 percent or greater. Restrict land clearance for development on hilltops and ridgelines.	PZC	BZC		
CANR6	2.	Develop methods that will protect the scenic vistas identified in the 1998 Town report titled “The Views of Newtown.”	PZC	BZC		
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Section/ Issue	No.	Strategy	Leader	Required Support	Required Support	Required Support
<b>CANR6</b>	<b>3.</b>	Incorporate “view shed” analysis as a requirement of future development applications.	<b>PZC</b>	<b>BZC</b>		
<b>CANR6</b>	<b>4.</b>	Implement the requirements that plans for future residential-land subdivisions containing 6 lots or more shall be submitted both in the form of open-space conservation developments that preserve fifty percent (50%) or more of the land for open space and conventional arrangements for the Planning and Zoning Commissioners to decide which represents the best utilization of the tract of land.	<b>PZC</b>			

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